

# TELLING THE STORY OF THE CLASS OF 2022

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When we look back to tell the story of the Class of 2022, we must acknowledge where the world was amid the pandemic. All educational institutions and organizations swayed between how to safely gather in person while also offering virtual experiences. Schools had just begun to move from a complete shutdown to a hybrid world, while Convent & Stuart Hall was ahead of the curve and had already found a way to deliver our education fully in person safely. This set the stage for a college process for our seniors and their families that was more challenging and uncertain than in previous years. However, our college counseling team was hopeful.

The Class of 2022 came together at the A.C.T. Theater for the first joint Convent & Stuart Hall high school commencement ceremony, held on May 27, 2022.

Make no mistake — there was no full return to normalcy. Even now, the California market still struggles to provide students access to standardized testing. Many seniors experienced test cancellations and the anxiety of registering for an exam and preparing for it, only to have it canceled within a day of its administration. Countless articles seemed to possess a tone of an admissions doomsday looming as application numbers soared for the most selective colleges in the country. Seniors and their parents began their college search journey more doubtful and suspicious of a process that is already veiled. How do we instill in our families a feeling of trust in our years of expertise and our expansive network and partnerships with admissions officers so they feel confident that they are in good hands?

Our college counseling team relied on what was most important to our success as a collective — being available for each student. Unlike other institutions in the Bay Area, our college counseling model has always included a dedicated class to meet with students weekly, beginning in the spring of their junior year and throughout their senior year. The class, led by the college counselors and several guest speakers, offers students the gift of time, direct expertise and resources that aim to reduce stress by giving them benchmarks and structure.

The most significant benchmark is that every junior completes the first draft of their college essay before the start of the summer. The college counselors, all of whom have worked as college admissions officers, review their essays, not to intrude but to share and reflect with students about how to strengthen their main message. In August, before school begins, seniors gather alongside 16 college admissions officers who offer

**“My experience with the Convent & Stuart Hall College Counseling Department was exceptional. I felt empowered by the consistent and accessible support of my college counselor. I was able to work closely with my counselor and utilize resources like the college search tool and spreadsheet, but it is ultimately up to each student to stay motivated and take advantage of the department’s expertise and assistance during the college application process.”**

- ANDRE-PADRAIG PANG '22 | NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY '26

**“My teachers and the college counseling team were consistently willing to help me. I have vivid memories of popping into the college counseling offices to prepare for an interview, edit an essay or work out one of my many application-related questions.”**

- MIRA CHAWLA '22 | SCIENCES PO (PARIS, FRANCE) AND U.C. BERKELEY '26

individualized feedback on each student’s college essay. Couple this with open meeting times with their college counselor and the weekly college counseling class, and you can see the breadth of a college process that does not require our families to seek outside resources.

We learned from the few families who chose to include an outside resource, like an “essay coach” or an independent counselor who promises “better outcomes,” that, ultimately, they experienced a slow process with too many meetings. In many ways, they felt beholden to their consultant instead of empowered to utilize the already abundant resources and real-time information that the school’s college counseling team provides.

Of our graduating Class of 2022, 38 percent matriculated to the most selective colleges in the United States. The Strategic Plan calls us to offer an education that inspires and encourages “students as producers.” Ultimately, our seniors who conducted rigorous research, published original works and had high-quality community service engagement were accepted by the most selective colleges.

Our rich heritage calls us to educate young people to be thoughtful and reflective, and it demands us to always put students first. The college counseling team maintains strong relationships with colleagues on the other side of the admissions gates to learn, share and grow partnerships so that we always provide our students with the most current and accurate information.

While others felt displeasure and a sense of loss, our community was already equipped to navigate and succeed in the face of uncertainty. The pressure created by the pandemic tested our structures and challenged our bearings, but we came away from it with our purpose as Sacred Heart educators fully intact: If we continue putting students first — offering them a substantial and purposeful education every day — they will always embody what universities have grown to love about our students — the essence of the whole person.